

**SPRING FOOTBALL ISSUE**

# Aggieland

ILLUSTRATED

## SPRING STANDOUTS

GARRICK WILLIAMS AND RYAN SWOPE  
ARE AI'S SPRING FOOTBALL MVPs

### ALSO INSIDE:

2011 Recruiting  
Elzé Potgieter  
Spring Sports Update  
Mike Sherman in Baghdad  
Austin Krajicek  
Rhi Kliesing  
And More...



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**On the Cover:** Junior inside linebacker Garrick Williams and sophomore wide receiver Ryan Swope. Photo by Jason McConnell '01.

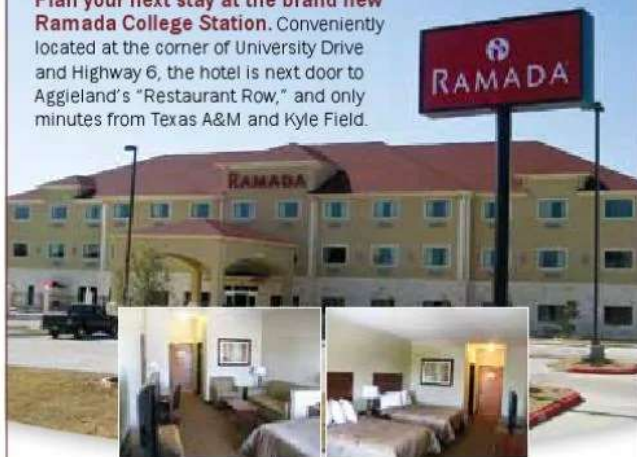
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**Do you recognize the above photo from campus?** Send an e-mail to [photo@aggiemag.com](mailto:photo@aggiemag.com) and let us know where it was taken. Be the first to get it right and we'll send you a **free gift**. Look for the answer in the next issue of *AI*. The March/April 2010 photo was from the Jack K. Williams Administration building.

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## **publisher's note**

### **Howdy!**

Thanks for picking up the 27th issue of *Aggieland Illustrated*. Whether you're a longtime subscriber, a first-time reader or somewhere in between, we always appreciate you taking a look at our publication. *AI* continues to be produced for Aggies by Aggies who love Texas A&M University and its athletic programs.

Speaking of athletics, spring football has come and gone and things seem to be winding down in Aggieland. There were plenty of signs of progress by Mike Sherman's squad this spring, and, of course, still some areas of concern. You saw two of the brightest spots on our cover – Garrick Williams and Ryan Swope. Read more on spring football on page 19 and more on our spring MVPs on page 22.

Meanwhile, several spring sports are beginning postseason competition, or will over the next few weeks. In fact, as long as baseball finishes strong, every spring sport will participate in NCAA postseason play. All of the programs are capable of making some noise in the NCAAs, but keep a close eye on golf, tennis and track.

Men's golf will be defending their national championship, while the women won their fourth Big 12 title before ending their season in the NCAA Regionals.

On the tennis court, both teams appear to have what it takes to make a deep run in the tournament. The men are led by junior Austin Krajicek (read his story on page 24), while senior Elzé Potgieter leads the women (read her story on page 26).

And last but not least, Pat Henry's track and field program continues to get better and better. Both the men and women are ranked No. 1 in the nation going into postseason competition. They will be defending their national titles in Eugene, OR in June.

Finally, I have to give my two cents on the greatest recent "good bull" story to come out of the Texas A&M football program. Coach Sherman has continued to impress with his actions and ideas off the field. Now he's topped them all by travelling across the world to Baghdad to visit the troops who are protecting our country. Read more and see some pictures of Sherman in Baghdad on page 29.

The jury is still out on if Sherman is the man to return Aggie football to prominence. But there's no debating that Sherman the man is an exemplary representative of Texas A&M University. We're lucky to have him.

Gig'em Ags!

*Brian '01*

P.S. You can order back issues of *Aggieland Illustrated* online at [www.aggielandillustrated.com/archive.html](http://www.aggielandillustrated.com/archive.html)

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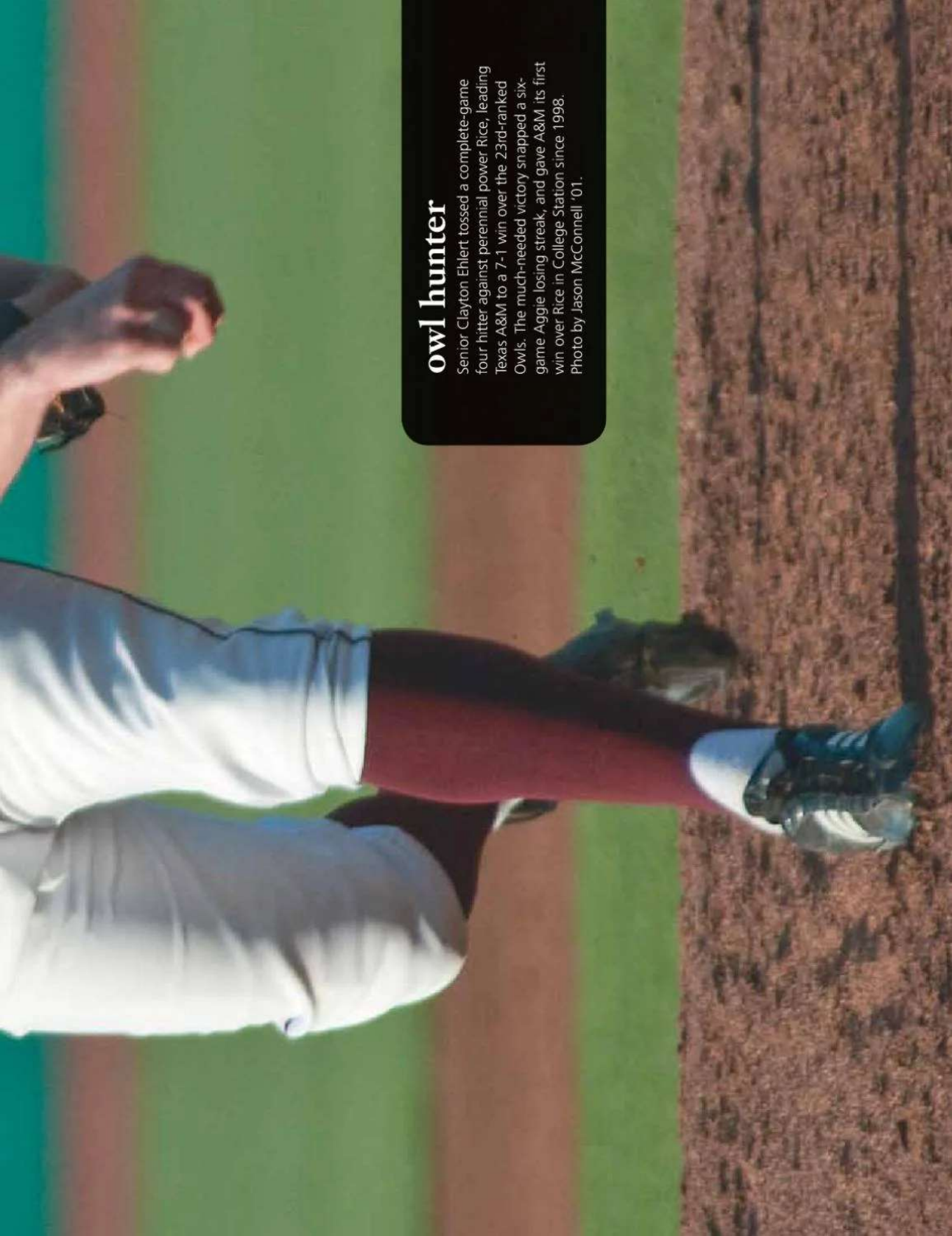
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## owl hunter

Senior Clayton Ehler tossed a complete-game four hitter against perennial power Rice, leading Texas A&M to a 7-1 win over the 23rd-ranked Owls. The much-needed victory snapped a six-game Aggie losing streak, and gave A&M its first win over Rice in College Station since 1998.

Photo by Jason McConnell '01.



## calling her shot

The Texas A&M softball team points to the outfield sky as Meagan May bats in the Aggies' home finale against Baylor. The team was calling for May to hit a home run and the freshman slugger did not disappoint, blasting a 2-run shot over the left field wall – her school-record 21st home run of the season. Photos by Jason McConnell '01.





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maroon&white recruiting

## getting defensive

BY JEREMY KSIONDA '04

In our last issue, we took an in-depth look at the offensive targets in the 2011 recruiting class. As predicted, the Ags picked up a pledge from Atascotita offensive lineman Nathan Gutekunst and Leander wideout Jonathan Henderson. Since that time, the Aggie coaching staff appears to have shifted their focus to the defensive side of the ball.

Safety Devonta Burns of Arlington Martin made a verbal commitment to the Aggies during the weekend of the spring game, and could be the first of many dominoes to fall in the ensuing months. Here, we take a closer look at some of A&M's top defensive targets that could be soon to follow:

### LB (3-4)

#### TARGETS:

**OLB Donnie Baggs** (Clear Springs) *Committed to Texas A&M*

**OLB Aaron Wallace, Jr.** (San Diego, CA)

**LB Trevon Randle** (Clear Springs) *Committed to LSU*

**LB Kent Turene** (Fort Lauderdale, FL)

**LB Shaun Ward** (Fort Lauderdale, FL) *Committed to Maryland*

**LB Anthony Wallace** (Dallas Skyline)

**LB/S Franklin Shannon** (Dallas Skyline)

**S Lyndell Johnson** (Plano East)

**LB David Santos** (Klein Collins)

**KEEP AN EYE ON: Aaron Wallace, Jr.** Yep, you guessed it. Aaron Wallace, Jr. is the son of none other than legendary Wrecking Crew linebacker Aaron Wallace, Sr. After picking up MVP honors at the TCU Nike camp this spring, Wallace's stock has soared. The Aggies were the first to extend an offer, but several Pac-10 schools are beginning to follow suit. Still, the family ties should be strong enough to keep "Wallace" a household name in Aggieland.

**PROGNOSIS:** With the transition to the 3-4 defense, recruiting linebackers will probably be a priority for the next few years. Look for the Aggies to take at least three in this class, possibly more. The Ft. Lauderdale duo of Turene and Ward would be a huge coup for new defensive line coach and area recruiter Terrell Williams, but not as big as the Skyline duo of Wallace and Shannon would be for new inside linebacker coach Dat Nguyen. The truth is, the Aggie coaching staff would love nothing more than to add any combination of the players listed above to their commitment list.

### DB (3-5)

#### TARGETS:

**S Howard Matthews** (Clear Springs)

**S Devonta Burns** (Arlington Martin) *Committed to Texas A&M*

**CB Josh Stewart** (Denton Guyer) *Committed to Texas A&M*

**ATH James Bailey** (Everman)

**ATH Daniel Spencer** (Grandview)

**S Alex Matlock** (Pflugerville)

**ATH Desmond Roland** (Lake Highlands)

**CB Charles Jackson** (Klein Collins)

**CB Marcus Roberson** (Ft. Lauderdale, FL)

**DB Jalen Brown** (Irving Macarthur)




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**KEEP AN EYE ON: Whitehouse's Quincy Alridge.** Had he not suffered a season-ending knee injury as a junior, Alridge would probably already hold an Aggie offer. He's scheduled to camp in Aggieland sometime this summer, and it shouldn't come as a surprise to see him blow up the competition and prove himself worthy of a scholarship. The rangy, speedy defender would be a welcomed addition to the maroon and white as a safety or possibly even an outside linebacker someday.

**PROGNOSIS:** The Aggies are already in good shape so far this season, picking up big-time pledges from speedy cornerback Josh Stewart and hard-hitting safety Devonta Burns. As many as three more targets could find themselves on A&M's commitment list, as another corner and two more safety/linebacker types appear to be on defensive coordinator Tim DeRuyter's wishlist.

## DL (3-4)

### TARGETS:

**DT Quincy Russell** (San Antonio Sam Houston)

**DT Marquis Anderson** (Cibola Steele)

*Committed to Oklahoma*

**DE Cedric Reed** (Cleveland)

*Committed to Texas*

**DT Isaiah Norton** (Dallas Kimball)

**DE Nathan Hughes** (Klein Oak)

*Committed to Oklahoma*

**OL/DL LaRaven Clark** (Rockdale)

**OL/DL Shayvion Hatten** (Daingerfield)

*Committed to TCU*

**DE Ben Goodman** (Beaumont Westbrook)

**DE Beau Blackshear** (Waco Midway)

**DT Mickey Johnson** (Covington, LA)

**DE Jermauria Rasco** (Shreveport, LA)

**KEEP AN EYE ON: Cleveland's Cedric Reed.** The Aggies suffered a pretty big blow when Reed decided to cast his lot with the Longhorns this spring. He was considered a Texas lean for quite some time, but new defensive line coach Terrell Williams made tremendous strides in the Cleveland standout's recruitment, leaving the Aggie faithful hopeful that he could convince Reed to don the maroon and white. While he's not very likely to switch, we're not ready to concede this recruiting battle just yet. There are still a few factors working in A&M's corner, so this one should at least be worth keeping an eye on for a while.

**PROGNOSIS:** The Ags still have a ways to go in terms of stockpiling difference makers along the defensive line. JUCO transfer Jonathan Mathis and incoming freshman Ivan Robinson should provide some help in that regard, but the Aggies would still love nothing more than to sign at least three high profile prospects this time around. Don't be surprised to see them dip back into the state of Louisiana and keep an eye out for some late bloomers in the Lone Star State. **AJ**

For more Texas A&M recruiting, contact Billy Liucci of the *Maroon & White Report* at (979) 690-7361 or by visiting [texags.com](http://texags.com)

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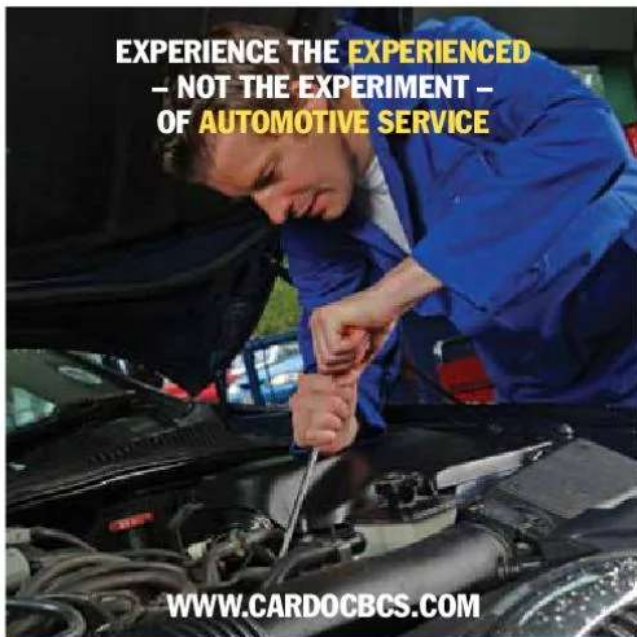
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(baseball) Timely hitting and untimely errors have plagued the Texas A&M baseball team in the second half of this season. With six more conference games to go, the Aggies find themselves in fifth place in the Big 12 with a 9-11-1 record, and needing a strong finish to assure a fourth consecutive NCAA bid. (softball) Led by the most talented freshman duo since Megan Gibson and Amanda Scarborough, the Aggie softball team has finished the regular season strong and are a virtual lock to play in the postseason for the ninth consecutive year. The only question still to be answered is if they will get an opportunity to host an NCAA Regional.



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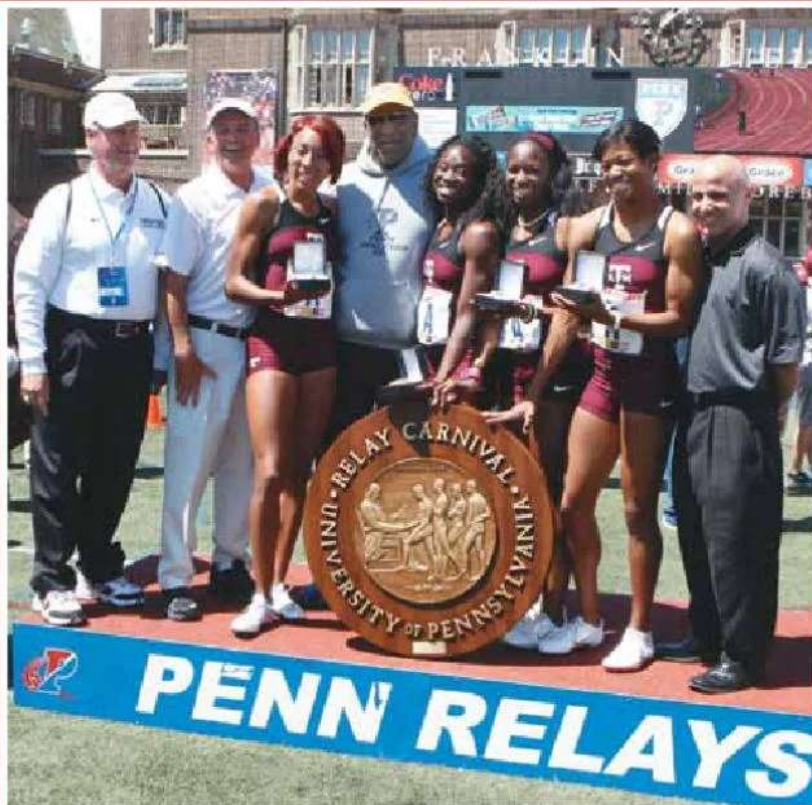
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**(equestrian)** The Texas A&M western team brought home the equestrian program's eighth national championship and seniors Caroline Gunn and Maggie Gratny won individual titles at the 2010 Varsity Equestrian National Championships. Coupled with the fourth-place finish by the hunter seat team, the Aggies earned their fourth consecutive runner-up finish in the overall championship. **(track)** By the end of the three-day Penn Relay Carnival, Texas A&M had tallied four Championship of America titles in relay events and added a pair of individual titles in college division jump events. Both teams are ranked No. 1 in the nation going into the Big 12 Championships. **(tennis)** After successful conference seasons, the A&M tennis teams earned at large bids to the NCAA Tennis Championships. It marked the men's 17th consecutive bid and the women's 11th. **(golf)** The No. 24 women's golf team rallied from 11 shots down in the final round to win the 2010 Big 12 Championship. The Aggies' rally past second-round leader Oklahoma State was the largest final round comeback in the history of the Big 12 Women's Golf Championships. The No. 2 men's golf team wasn't quite as fortunate at the 2010 Big 12 Men's Golf Championships, finishing runner-up behind top-ranked Oklahoma State.






  
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## Ten questions for the junior Aggie softball player

BY AI STAFF

### When did you start playing softball?

I started playing in a league in Pearland called the Dad's Club when I was about 4 years old. When I was a freshman in high school I started playing in a league out of Sugar Land.

### Why did you choose Texas A&M?

My original reason was to be a veterinarian. I've always loved animals and when I was about 10 years old, my mom and I visited the museum they have and I just loved it. Ever since then, I wanted to come here to play softball and go to vet school.

### You are being asked to pitch a lot less this season and having more success at the plate. Is their less pressure on you now that you can put most of your focus on batting?

There's definitely a lot less pressure. On the mound last year, it was just me and a freshman who didn't have a lot of experience. But this year, Becca [Arbino] has a year of experience under her belt and Mel [Dumezich] is doing a great job, so I can relax a little bit, do my thing at the plate, play first base and pitch when they need me.

### What's your favorite pitch to throw and your favorite to hit?

Now that I've mastered a decent changeup, I'd say it's my favorite to throw. It's fun to make hitters look silly. My favorite to hit is probably a screwball that doesn't break a lot.

### How much have the freshman helped the team this season?

They have really stepped up, especially since conference play started. Lauren [Schwartz] has been moved to leadoff and she has done a great job of getting on base a lot. Sydney [Shannon] has been batting at the two-hole and has done really well. Mel has been all over the field, playing second base and shortstop, pitching lights out and hitting the ball well too. Victoria [Lehrmann] has been a leader in the dugout this year for us. And then Meagan of course has been huge for us this season. I can't wait to see how many homeruns she hits by the time she's finished here.

### Do you have any pregame rituals or superstitions?

Before every game, it's my job to make sure nobody's sleeves are rolled up, so I brush everyone's sleeves while the other team is being introduced.

### What's the purpose of the punching bag between the dugout and the locker room?

Well, in softball, we tend to get angry when we don't perform as well as we could. For instance, if we are batting with bases loaded and strike-out or hit into a double play, coach thought it would be better if we took our aggression out on the punching bag instead of the equipment or our teammates. So if we need to let off some steam, we grab an old bat, take a few swings at the bag and then go back out there.

### Have you ever used it?

Yes, I've used it before (laughing). I'm pretty sure I used it in the Texas game when I struck out twice.

### What's your favorite thing about being an Aggie?

My favorite thing is playing in front of the 12th Man. There's just nothing like it anywhere else. The energy and atmosphere is amazing.

### What's your favorite Aggie tradition?

Midnight Yell. We always take our recruits when they come on their visits and it's always a lot of fun because we get to go out on the football field with everyone. **AI**

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# spring football report

What we learned from spring drills and who to keep an eye on this fall

BY JEREMY KSIONDA '04

There was an added air of excitement in spring practice this year, thanks in large part to the return of senior linebacker Von Miller and the introduction of new defensive coordinator Tim DeRuyter. As the defense transitioned to the 3-4 alignment, the offense broke in three new starters along the offensive line, as well as a pair of freshman quarterbacks. Here, we take a closer look at a few Aggies who managed to stand out among the crowd.

## OFFENSIVE MVP: WR RYAN SWOPE

Day in, day out, the sophomore wideout was nothing short of spectacular. Swope picked up right where he left off from the fall and elevated his game to another level this spring. His ability to catch the ball in the flats and constantly turn the corner and run over, around and through defenders left bystanders in awe on a regular basis. When you consider the fact that the Aggie defensive backs were the strength of the defense this spring, Swope's performance was all the more impressive. And while he didn't get much of a chance to show off his skills in live action on the kickoff return team, his 80-yard runback in the spring game left Aggie fans yearning for more.

## DEFENSIVE MVP: LB GARRICK WILLIAMS

It was tough to give the nod to anyone other than Von Miller, but the emergence of Williams at inside linebacker was the single most encouraging thing to watch on the field this spring. Under the tutelage of former A&M All-American Dat Nguyen, Williams used his experience and natural talent to quickly grasp the intricacies of Tim DeRuyter's new 3-4 defense. Like Swope, Williams was able to build upon his 2009 campaign and emerged as one of the team's true leaders this spring. Whether he was filling the gaps to stuff the run or roaming the backfield in coverage, No. 8 was a force to be reckoned with, and should be another target for opponents to scheme around this fall.



lional SMITH (JR)

cyrus GRAY (JR)

## WHO TO WATCH: ON OFFENSE

### QB JERROD JOHNSON

Even in limited action, Johnson showed why he's going to the preseason Big 12 offensive player of the year next fall. His ability to command and execute the offense put any quarterback controversies to rest for good. And when he wasn't able to participate, Johnson spent the spring mentoring true freshmen quarterbacks Matt Joeckel and Jameill Showers. Johnson's last spring in maroon and white might not have been full of fireworks, but it undoubtedly left a lasting impression on the A&M program.

### RB CHRISTINE MICHAEL

It's rare to see a player truly enjoy practice. What's even rarer is to see a five-star, blue-chip, all-everything running back embrace practice the way Michael does. He sprints to the end of every play, sprints back to the huddle, and points his finger toward the sky to give God the glory on touchdown runs. If he hadn't been a little dinged up, we could have easily made a case for Michael to be offensive MVP.

### RB CYRUS GRAY

Competition makes everyone better. At running back, the competition between Gray and Michael is making them phenomenal. Though he's only been on campus a year and a half, the junior-to-be continues to make tremendous strides on the football field. If it's possible, Gray seemed more difficult than ever to bring

down in the open field. The Ags might be bringing in three running backs this fall, but each of them will have an uphill battle to unseat the amazing 1-2 punch of Gray and Michael.

### WR TERRENCE MCCOY

We don't know whether it was his brother's ability to capitalize on opportunities as a senior or another year under Dave Kennedy's strength training, but whatever it was, something triggered the best to come out in McCoy this spring. He ran better routes, caught the ball with consistency and even seemed a step faster this spring. His performance was good enough to take over Uzoma Nwachukwu's starting role by the end of the spring.

### WR JEFF FULLER

The defensive backs were probably the most improved unit on the team this spring and Fuller was a big reason why. Not that they got the best of the junior phenom – although they did manage to win some head-to-head battles on occasion – but having to face Fuller every day in practice undoubtedly made the young defenders better. Simply put, No. 8 is on another level, and when you consider the talent stockpiling among the Aggie receiving corps, that's pretty high praise.

### TE HUTSON PRIOLEAU

Prioleau was one of the few freshmen who had the luxury of redshirting last season.

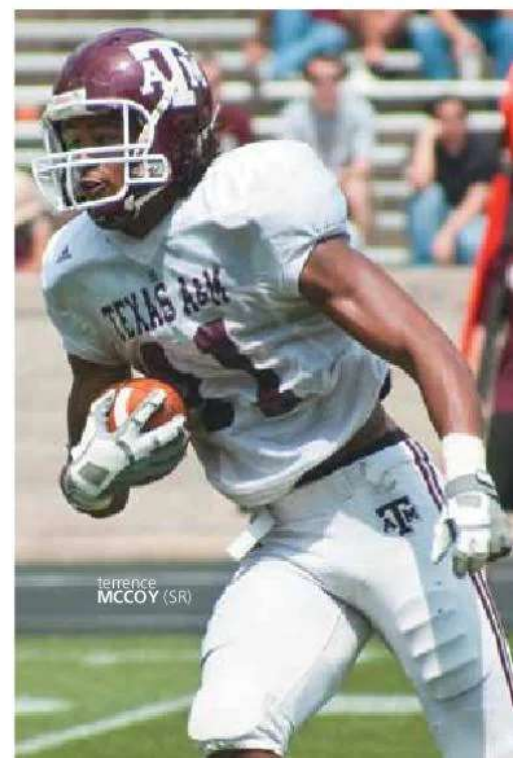
As a result, not many knew what to expect from the 6-4, 260 lb tight end. From the looks of things this spring, it's probably safe to say that the Ags have found their starter moving forward. Prioleau's the complete package: an aggressive blocker on the inside and a mobile, sure-handed pass catcher in the open field.

### OL LUKE JOECKEL

Luke Joeckel. Remember that name. Chances are you probably already know it. The true freshman left tackle enrolled early this spring along with his twin brother, Matt, and exceeded the great expectations surrounding him. It's no secret that the Ags have been hurting along the offensive line for a while now, but if the rest of the highly touted incoming class can perform at the same level as Joeckel did this spring, the unit will be the overall strength of the team in short order.

### OL BRIAN THOMAS

If there was an award for most improved player, Thomas would have received the nod. The sophomore took over at right tackle in place of Rhontae Scales and never looked back. Though slightly undersized, Thomas displayed a good combination of size and strength, opening up holes in the running game and showing good pass protection. He's going to have to hold off a bevy of young talent coming in this fall, but it appears that Thomas will be more than up for the challenge.



terrence MCCOY (SR)

## WHO TO WATCH: ON DEFENSE

### LB VON MILLER

Much like Jeff Fuller on offense, Miller is simply on another level. The returning All-American was a terror again this spring, registering multiple sacks on a daily basis. He also managed to improve his pass coverage skills and worked hard to get better as an overall outside linebacker under Tim Deruyter's new 3-4 scheme. More than anything, though, Miller challenged fellow defenders and continued to emerge as the unquestioned leader of the Aggie defense.

### LB CHARLIE THOMAS

It's only fitting that just as a legendary Aggie linebacker returned to campus, a young linebacker wearing number nine began to stand out on the gridiron. While Thomas isn't quite cut from the same mold as Dat Nguyen, the freshman looked solid at outside linebacker this spring. Though slightly undersized, Thomas has a flash off the edge that's rivaled only by Von Miller, and his experience at safety allows him to excel in pass coverage as well. Charlie's best days are still probably a year or two away, but there's no questioning his physical abilities.

### DT LUCAS PATTERSON

Patterson has been somewhat a journeyman during his time at A&M, particularly since Mike Sherman's arrival. However, it looks as though Patterson has finally found a home at nose tackle. The senior drew high praise from new defensive line coach Terrell Williams this spring as he drew double teams and still managed to find himself in the offensive backfield.

### CB LIONEL SMITH

Smith made an amazing transformation this spring. If you paid close attention last season, you could almost see it coming. The lights began to come on for the raw but athletic Smith, and he finally put all the puzzle pieces together this spring. An injury to Terrence Frederick allowed Smith the opportunity to compete with the first team defense, and he never looked back.

### CB CORYELL JUDIE

After an injury caused JUCO transfer cornerback Coryell Judie to redshirt last fall, it was clear that he was hungry to get back into action this spring. Right out of the gate, Judie made his presence felt, constantly jumping to the front of the



line in one-on-one drills to take on Jeff Fuller. He might not have won the battle every time, but Judie did manage to win a few matchups, and in turn caused the rest of the corners to step up their game. Suddenly, what was once a glaring weakness has transformed into a team strength, with Judie, Smith, Frederick and an ever-improving Dustin Harris forming a solid two deep unit.

### S STEVEN TERRELL

Terrell was thrust into action as a true freshman at cornerback last season. While he did a serviceable job, safety was always his more natural position. This spring, Terrell got a chance to show the Aggie faithful just exactly what he's capable of. He consistently broke up passes in spring ball, and flashed the blazing speed that's been lacking at the position for a good while now. He has to hold off fellow sophomore Steven Campbell this fall, who was set to go into the spring as a starter alongside Trent Hunter until an injury set him back. **MI**

# GARRICK WILLIAMS

Ten questions for AI's spring defensive MVP

BY AI STAFF

**What was the biggest factor that led to your success this spring?**

I just had to make the decision to buy in to playing linebacker and ever since then, I've been doing well and getting better.

**Did you ever imagine you would be playing linebacker when you came to A&M?**

Never. When I was in high school, I played quarterback and wide receiver. Defense wasn't even on my mind. When I got to A&M, they put me at safety. Then, I moved to outside linebacker, and now I'm an inside linebacker. But the transition has been going well for me.

**How did you mentally approach spring practice?**

I came out every day and told myself that I had to get better. There's no time to take any steps back. I have to do my part in order for us to do the things we're trying to do. As a defense, we're going to step up our game, so I have to do my part to step up as well. Practice hard, watch film and come back better the next time.

**How about physically?**

It's different playing inside instead of outside linebacker. Now, I have to take on guards and tackles. So I have to work in the weight room to get stronger and be tougher.

**Who is the nastiest offensive lineman on the team?**

All of them are pretty...weak (laughs). I'm just playing. I would have to say Matt Allen. I like working against him the best because he never holds anything back. If it's a run, he's going for the big block and I have to be prepared for that. We go at it every practice.

**How do you feel you've progressed since you first arrived at A&M?**

The coaches always tell me that I've come a million miles, but I tell myself that I still have a million to go. There's always room for improvement.

**What's your favorite play/package on defense?**

Bomb Two Zone Dog. That's a play where I get to drop and wall number two. I also like Tampa Two. I get to drop straight back to the middle of the field like I'm a safety. There aren't any run reads or anything to think about.

**Would you rather have a big interception or a big forced fumble?**

I'd rather have a big interception, because I'm going for six when I get it.

**Who was the toughest guy to tackle this spring?**

There are two of them – Cyrus [Gray] and Christine [Michael]. Cyrus will give you one move and he's gone and you aren't going to catch him. And Christine does so much amazing stuff, I don't even have words for it. You have to respect every move he makes. Cyrus and Christine compliment each other very well and are hard backs to take down.

**What has it been like playing for and learning from your new position coach, Dat Nguyen?**

It's been an experience, because I have a Lombardi winner as my coach. He played at the highest level for the Dallas Cowboys. He knows what he's doing and what he's talking about. I'm going to do anything he tells me, no matter what. **AI**





# RYAN SWOPE

Ten questions for AI's spring offensive MVP  
BY AI STAFF

**What was the biggest factor that led to your success this spring?**

Our offense was really clicking and coach threw some new plays in there that really helped me. I was able to catch the ball in the open field and do what I could to make things happen.

**What's higher on your to-do list – a touchdown reception or returning a kickoff for a touchdown?**

They're both high up there, but I'd have to say that taking an opening kickoff back to the house would be pretty special.

**How did you mentally approach spring practice?**

I just try to do my best. There are so many good athletes around me and such good depth at the receiver positions, so I have to go out every day and get better.

**How about physically?**

Just be prepared to get after it. We had very physical spring practices, so you have to be your best to compete.

**Is there an area that you'd like to improve upon between now and the fall?**

I'd like to get stronger in my upper body and just stay healthy.

**How do you feel you've progressed since you first arrived at A&M?**

It's been a long road since I first got here. During two-a-days, they really didn't know what to do with me. I was going back and forth between running back and receiver – they were throwing me all over the place. It just took me a while to get settled and learn the offense. Once you take it all in, you can go 110 percent without second guessing yourself. That was my biggest concern, but once I knew everything, it made life much easier on the field.

**What has it been like playing for and learning from your new position coach, Steve Kragthorpe?**

Coach Thorpe is a great guy. I already have a great relationship with him – all the receivers do. He's exciting, has a lot of emotion in him and really knows his football. He has a lot of experience and knows what he's doing. He's already gained all the receivers' trust. I'm excited about getting to work with him in the fall.

**What's your favorite play/package on offense?**

I love catching the bubble screens. I like getting the ball in space and doing my thing. I like to run deep routes too, but who doesn't?

**Who is the toughest A&M defender to shake?**

I'm going to have to say Steven Terrell. We're always battling. Trent Hunter is pretty tough too.

**Who is the hardest hitter?**

Von Miller. Nobody wants to go up against Von. He's so physical. He's going to be unbelievable playing for us next season. **AI**

# For the Love of the Game

Junior All-American Austin Krajicek is pursuing his dream of becoming a professional tennis player

BY BRIAN DAVIS '01



Becoming a professional in any sport requires unique athletic ability, countless hours of hard work, unwavering dedication and sacrifice. For an example of someone doing whatever it takes to get there, see Texas A&M tennis star Austin Krajicek.

Ever since he was a young boy, Krajicek has dreamed of being a professional tennis player. Born in Tampa, FL, to athletic parents – his father played college basketball and his mother was a professional water skier – Krajicek first picked

up a tennis racquet when he was five years old. He never put it down.

At age 14, he moved to Bradenton, FL to attend the prestigious IMG/Bollettieri Tennis Academy. For two and a half years, he lived at the academy with ten other boys and was focused on nothing but improving his game. He would wake up at 7 a.m., start warming up on the courts at 7:30 and had his first 2-hour practice of the day at 8. At 10:30, it was time for an hour of fitness training. After lunch, it was time to practice again for another

two hours. The day's training ended with another hour of fitness, usually running.

"You pretty much couldn't move after that," he recalls.

After a shower, it was time to do schoolwork, get some much-needed rest or go to sleep. At 7 a.m. the next day, he woke up and started it all over again. That was his routine five days a week for those two and a half years. And if he wasn't training, he was playing in tennis tournaments.

"I didn't get to do all of the normal high school things, but it was worth it,"

"Austin is a dream to coach. When your best player is also your hardest worker, it sets the tone for the rest of the team. He's very professional and has shown a lot of courage this year."

— COACH STEVE DENTON

he admits. "I was able to see a lot of the world and gain a lot of experience playing tennis."

Born and raised in the Sunshine State, it should come as no surprise that Krajicek was a lifelong University of Florida fan. As a young boy, his room was decked out in orange and blue and his closet was full of Gator gear. He wasn't always sure that he would go to college, but if he did, it was always going to be Florida. That is until he met Texas A&M head coach Steve Denton.

"I had no idea that he had pretty much decided he was going to Florida when he was a young boy," Denton admits. "So out of ignorance, I went down there and told him that I thought we had something to offer his tennis. I knew he wanted to play professionally. [Assistant coach] Bob [McKinley] and I have been there and we felt like we could help him get there too by teaching him some of the nuances of the game."

The two made a pretty immediate connection and it obviously paid off. Before they met, Texas A&M was not even on Krajicek's radar. In fact, his only prior

connection with A&M was when he played at a junior tournament in College Station. An experience, he admits, that he didn't enjoy. His only debate was whether to turn pro or go to Florida.


But that all changed when he came back to Aggieland on his recruiting visit. The combination of the family atmosphere, the fantastic tennis center and the coaching staff won him over. So, when it came down to turning pro or going to college, he chose college. And when it was time to pick a school, he went against his childhood favorite and chose to be an Aggie.

"It was a very difficult choice," Krajicek recalls. "Everyone was encouraging me to go to Florida, but I decided I wanted to start something new."

Now a junior at A&M, Krajicek is a team captain and a two-time All-American. He's currently ranked No. 6 in the nation in singles and joins fellow junior and Florida native Jeff Dadamo to form the 5th-ranked doubles team. As a team, the Aggies are the 10 seed in the NCAA Division I Men's Tennis Championships. And later this month, Krajicek will compete in the individual tournament in singles for the second consecutive year, and doubles for the third consecutive year.

"Austin is a dream to coach," Denton said. "When your best player is also your hardest worker, it sets the tone for the rest of the team. He's very professional and has shown a lot of courage this year."

Krajicek has played in tennis tournaments all over the world, including as a wildcard in the U.S. Open and on a Davis Cup team with Andy Roddick and other elite level players. He's seen first-hand what it takes to be a professional, and it has reinforced what he's been working towards all of his life.

"I've wanted to turn pro ever since I was a little kid," he said. "If you want to make it, tennis becomes an all-the-time thing. There's not much free time, but that's just a sacrifice that you have to make. You really have to love it to do it. It's tough, but I love it. When I get there, I will see how high I can get." 



# From Africa to Aggieland



More than 9,000 miles from where it all began, senior Elzé Potgieter closes out her tennis career

BY BRIAN DAVIS '01

When it is all said and done, Elzé Potgieter will be remembered as one of the best to have ever played for the Texas A&M women's tennis program. The senior from South Africa has been a staple at the top of the singles and doubles lineups for the past three years, earning numerous honors and awards along the way – both for her play on the court and her work in the classroom. She has played tennis all over the world, including an ap-

pearance in the 2006 Junior Australian Open. She's also an accomplished baboon assassin. Yes – baboons.

Potgieter was born and raised on a farm in Bloemfontein, South Africa. Her family grew corn and other crops, and even sold bags of popcorn. They also had their share of animals including dogs, cats, cows, sheep and chickens – some of which they slaughtered for their own food. And then there were the aforemen-

tioned unwanted animal visitors.

"We had these big, vicious baboons running around our house," Potgieter recalls. "They would eat the food we put out for our dogs and try to come into our house. They were very scary. And you had to shoot them at least seven times before they would die."

Truthfully, she has only killed a few baboons in her life, but how many people can say they've killed a baboon – or even seen one in person?

Potgieter started playing tennis at age three when she could barely pick up an old wooden racquet. Growing up, her family vacations centered on where there was a tennis tournament.

"My parents, grandparents, uncles and cousins all played tennis," she said, "so we would all travel in a big pack to tournaments every holiday."

For the first few years of travels, Potgieter was just a spectator while the rest of her family competed. But by age six, she was playing in the tournaments too.

"Everyone else was playing so they decided to sign me up," she said. "I started doing well, so I kept playing in them."

At age 12, Potgieter was off to boarding school – the norm for kids in South Africa. She never spent much time at home, nor did she see her parents very often – but that's just the way life is over there. She moved on to a tennis academy about seven hours away from her home.

In South Africa, rugby and cricket are the dominant sports, while tennis is more of a social event. So for someone like Potgieter who wanted to continue advancing her tennis in college, it meant moving to another country.

"You might play five matches in a whole year at a university in South Africa," she said. "And you might have practice once a week, but it would be optional. America is packed with South African tennis players right now. I see one of my friends from home on just about every team we play against."

When trying to decide where to go, Potgieter talked to a lot of universities, looked at their web sites and even checked to see who had the biggest football stadiums.

"I saw a picture of Kyle Field and thought it looked amazing," she said. "We have nothing like it in South Africa. The biggest stadium is maybe three quarters of the size of Kyle Field, and that is

the national stadium."

Potgieter picked a few schools that she wanted to keep recruiting with and officially visited Texas A&M, University of North Carolina and University of San Diego. Ultimately, she chose A&M because of the college town atmosphere.

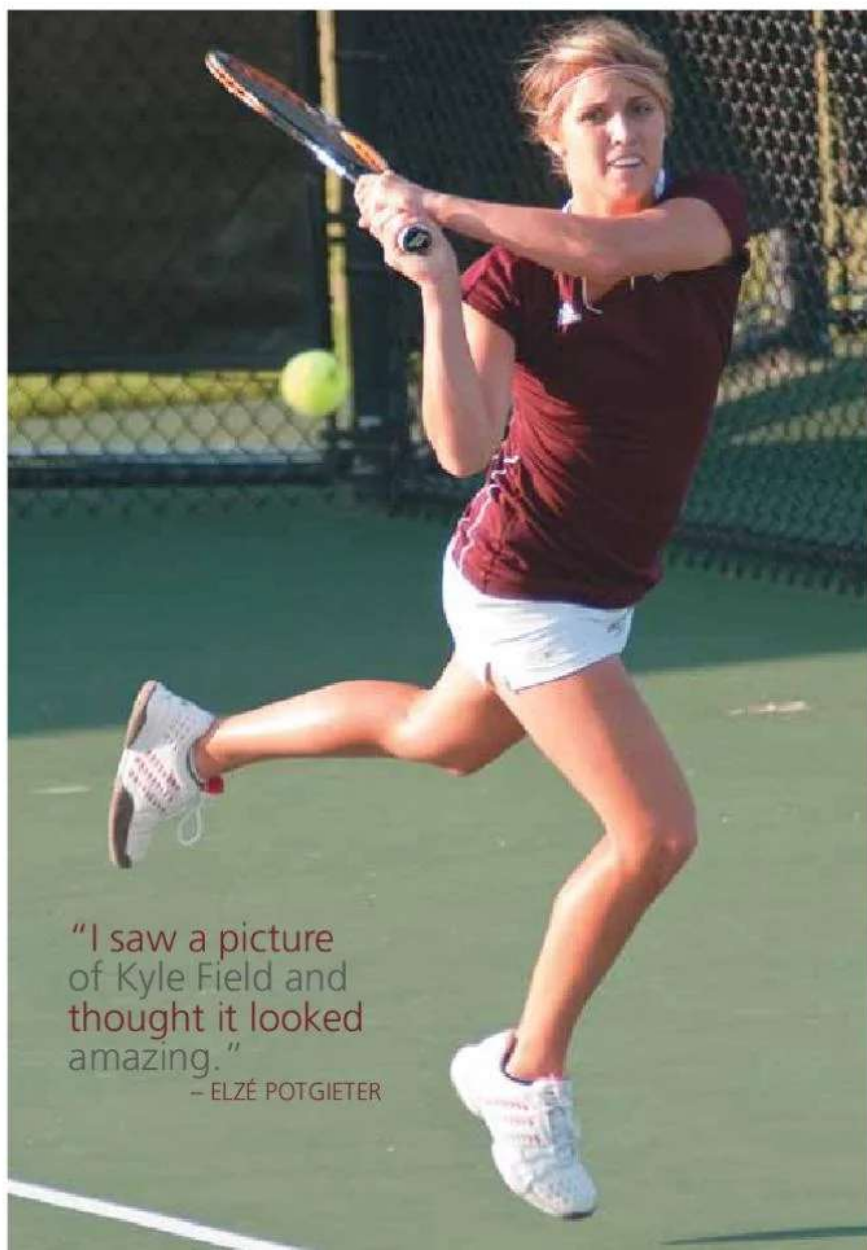
"I didn't want to go to a big city since I was so far away from home," she admits.

It turned out to be a perfect match. Four years later, she is enrolled in A&M's Professional Program in Accounting (a five-year program) and is on track to receive both a bachelor's and a master's degree next May. She was just named to the Academic All-Big 12 first team for the third consecutive year. She's been consistently listed among the top 100 players in the country, and her 90 career

wins in collegiate singles ranks seventh in the A&M record book. She led this year's team to its 11th consecutive bid to the NCAA Women's Tennis Team Championships and will close out her career by representing the Aggies in the NCAA Division I Women's Singles Championships later this month.

For now, Potgieter doesn't plan to pursue professional tennis after college. She's worked hard for her degree, and is looking forward to putting it to good use. That begins with an internship at Price-waterhouseCoopers this summer, which she hopes will lead to a job opportunity.

If that doesn't work out, Potgieter has shown that nothing will stand in the way of achieving her dreams. Certainly not a baboon. **K**



"I saw a picture of Kyle Field and thought it looked amazing."

— ELZÉ POTGIETER

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# A SPECIAL JOURNEY

BY JASON MCCONNELL '01

Typically during this time of the year, college football coaches focus on things like recruiting, keeping players in line and fine tuning playbooks. This spring, Texas A&M head coach Mike Sherman had something different in mind. Something special. A trip to visit troops in Baghdad.

Sherman first came up with the idea in January. Then just a few weeks later, he received an email from Kyle Gilbert '05, an Aggie serving in Iraq, asking if it would be possible for him to come for Aggie Muster. Sherman personally paid the expenses of the trip after receiving permission from Texas A&M President Dr. Bowen Loftin. While travel difficulties kept him from making it in time for Muster, Sherman did depart for the Middle East on May 2.

"As I have gotten older, I have an even greater appreciation for our country and the freedoms we enjoy because of our armed services," Sherman said. "I am so very honored to represent Texas A&M as the football coach and in a very small way let them (service people) know how much we all appreciate their daily sacrifices. As fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, to let them know how much we appreciate their efforts to secure our freedoms, and the difference they make for us here in America, as well as for the people in Iraq, and in the entire world."

This trip is another example of why so

many Aggies were excited about Sherman's return to Aggieland. It's not just about his ability to coach the game of football. You've heard it before. The man *gets* A&M. He understands the core values that Aggies hold dear: excellence, integrity, leadership, loyalty, respect and service.

He showed it when he immediately embraced former players and coaches, making it a priority to welcome them all back to Kyle Field, allowing current players and fans to reconnect to the past in the hopes of changing the future.

Sherman opened practices to students and alumni, an uncommon form of transparency in college athletics. He also strives to connect the student body with the football team: Spending time speaking to student leaders and groups, having student coaches on the sidelines in the spring game, and starting events like "Pigskin Palooza" enabling students to interact more with the team. He has accompanied the team to Silver Taps.

At every opportunity, Coach Sherman has opted to unite the fans to the team and the team to the school. Now, he is connecting the Spirit of Aggieland to the troops overseas. In Baghdad, a place where "Howdy" might not seem like much of a greeting, Sherman is going above and beyond the call of duty.

That is what makes a true Aggie.

Gig'em Coach Sherman. **AT**



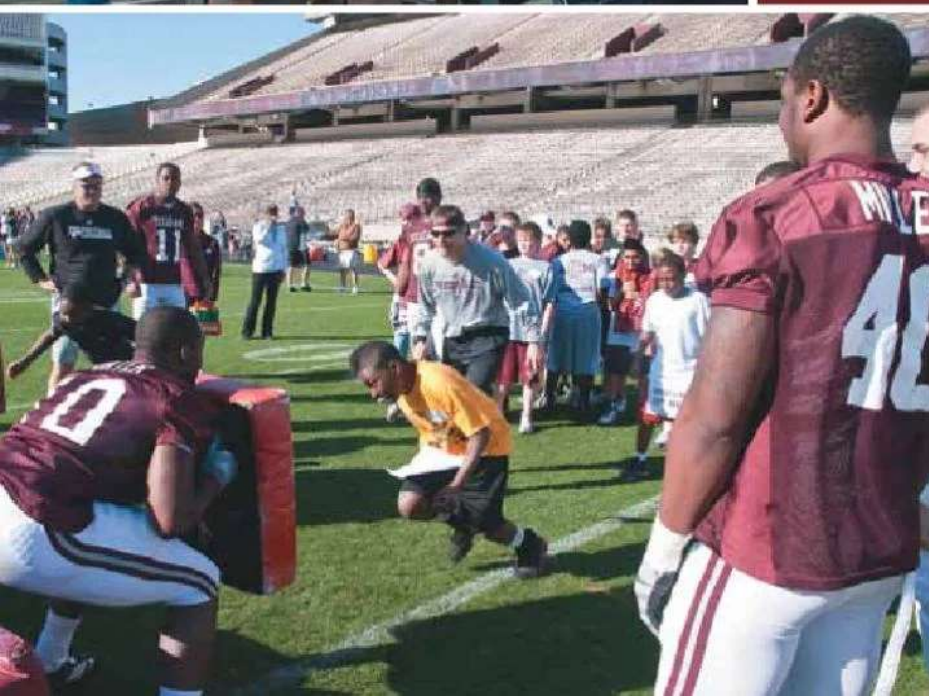
(above, top to bottom) Texas A&M head coach Mike Sherman presents General Odierno, the current commanding general of United States Forces - Iraq, with his own Texas A&M jersey. Sherman meets with U.S. Army Reserve troops from the 492nd Engineering Company, based in Mankato, Minnesota. During a tour of Al Faw Palace at Victory Base Camp, Sherman raises the U.S. flag given to him by United States Forces - Iraq service members. (below, left to right) Sherman tours Al Faw Palace at Victory Base Camp. At a special event in the evening, Sherman signed autographs and talked Texas A&M football and about life, in general, with fellow Aggies. Sherman rallies the service members present during a Texas-style BBQ meet and greet.

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(top) The Texas A&M Fish Drill Team performs on Kyle Field before the Maroon & White game. (left) The Softball Sugar Daddies finish a yell. (above) Olsen Field was packed with 8,123 fan for the Saturday Texas game – the fifth largest crowd in stadium history. (below) Hundreds of future Aggies came out for the annual Aggie Youth Experience at Kyle Field.





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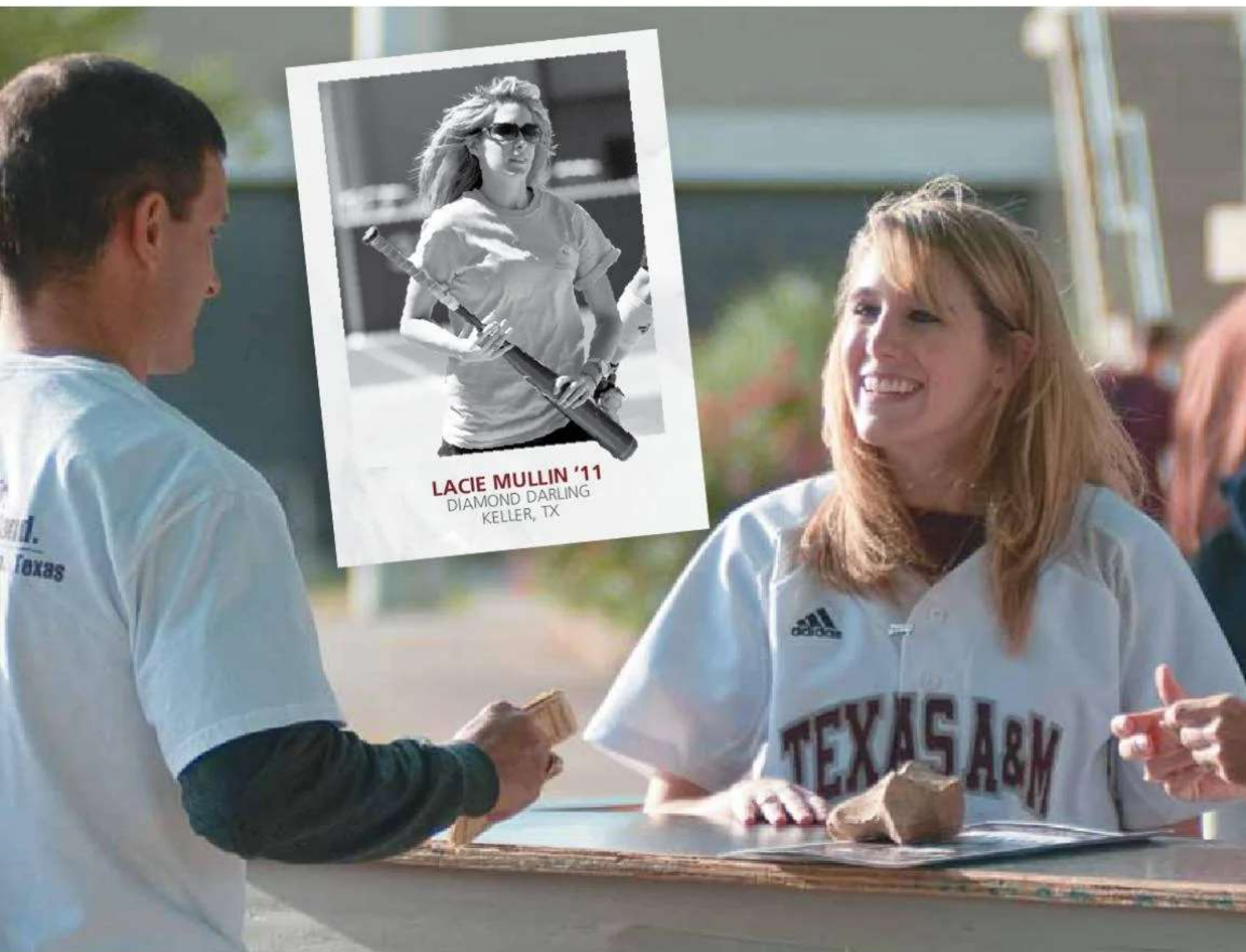
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**In 10 years I'll likely be** practicing law somewhere in Dallas and hopefully married with children.

**Why I love A&M:** A&M has a sense of pride and family that truly makes it unique.

**Favorite Aggie tradition:** Muster. The thought of countless students coming together to honor the fallen gives me chills.

**Movies I can't live without:** I love the Borne trilogy, Shooter, and of course chick-flicks.

**Music I can't live without:** I can't live without music in general. I love all kinds of music.

**TV Shows I can't live without:** 24, Gilmore Girls and The Bachelor.

**Why I joined the Diamond Darlings:** Baseball

has always been a major part of my family so when I came to A&M, I just had to be involved with the sport in some way.

**One misconception about the Diamond Darlings:** That we are all cleat-chasers...so not true!

**Hardest thing about being a Diamond Darling:** Definitely the time commitment. We are at Olsen Field 5 out of 7 days a week in the spring but it's worth it!

**My favorite baseball team is (besides the Aggies)** the Texas Rangers. They will forever be my team.

**I like to spend my weekends** at Olsen field or hanging out with my friends.

**Strange and unusual fact about me:** I love

sushi, which is weird because I don't like any other kind of seafood.

**My friends would be surprised to know that I used to play the piano.**

**If I had more time I would** travel. I absolutely love to travel.

**Favorite foods:** Chocolate and Italian food are my weaknesses.

**Five people I would like to have dinner with:** Joe Jonas, Greta Van Susteren, Josh Hamilton, Beth Moore and George Bush, Sr.

**Pet peeve:** Traffic in College Station...it drives me crazy!

**If I won the lottery, my first purchase would be** all the puppies in the Puppy Store. 



Led by Isabelle Rosberg and Jamie Hullet, the Texas A&M women's golf team won their first Big 12 title in 1998, edging archrival Texas by 4 strokes at the Jimmie Austin-OK Golf Club. The Big 12 Women's Golf Championship returned to Norman this April, and the Aggies came out on top again, rallying from 11 shots down in the final round for the victory – their fourth Big 12 crown.



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